2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

ing. On the eagle-trapping expeditions these two men supplied the meat for the camp. This party being small, only Crows Heart has that office. He should sleep opposite the Old Black Bear.

You should be tortured and cry for the birds to have good luck.

KINDS OF BIRDS

1. Bald-headed Eagle. White head and white tail. Parent to speckled eagle.
2. Speckled Eagle.
3. Spotted-barred tail. Body is black.
4. White tail with black tip. Known as the calumet eagle.
5. "Half of each feather good, half bad."
6. "Black but has white tails"; head is white; is a hawk.
7. I'pamasina.
8. Chicken hawk. Tails barred black and light brown.
9. Goose.
10. One of the smaller geese.

The twelve sticks on the altar represent the twelve tail feathers but also represent the ten birds listed above.

When in the pit one must not smoke. When you get in, even up the grass and while you are away from the pit hide the poles put on top to keep grass from blowing.

When tying the bait, be sure to put it close enough so that you can reach the bird. You will get a wooden pin from the leader to stick into the wall for the snare to hang onto. When catching an eagle, grab one foot first; then the bird will pull away from the pit; get a hold of the other foot and hold both feet with one hand; then fold its wings over and choke it with the snare.

The second day in camp was usually spent digging new pits or cleaning out those previously used. The walls of old pits were often broken in. Care was taken to remove all the earth in baskets or robes to a place where the birds would not see it or the people walk on it.[32] The pits should be deep enough for the trapper to sit upright in but not quite long enough to stretch out full length in. Most trappers had their pits on the tops of hills near the northwest edge, but it was believed that the best pits were those on the northwest slope, about three rods from the top of the hill, so situated that there was an open view for many miles westward. Birds approaching from that direction while still flying high in the air could see the bait.

In alighting, they would fly beyond the summit of the hill and turn back to light, facing into the west wind. It was difficult to find a good natural location. Should the pit be too near the rim, the birds lit too far back and were likely to sense danger while walking up to the bait. On the other hand, pits located too far

32. This was done because the pit was sacred.

2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

ing of trappers was performed the evening that the pits were completed.

Ordinarily when a party was composed of advanced middle-aged men, none were tortured, except on occasions when the birds would not stop, or when the winds continued from the wrong direction, there would be fasters on the hills crying during the night. If bad luck continued, then some would offer their bodies for torture and even cut off a piece of finger as an offering to the birds. In historic times there seems to have been somewhat more emphasis of the torture feature when eagle-trapping by the Mandan than the Hidatsa. Since we know from historic accounts[35] that the torture feature was highly developed with the Mandan, it appears that there occurred a transfer from village to nonvillage rites, the latter taking place when on hunting, eagle-trapping, and war expeditions.

Someone was selected, generally one of the waiters, to go out before daylight to determine the direction of the wind. The wind must be from a westerly direction, or it was believed that the birds were not traveling. Crows Heart explained that the calumet eagles nested in the Rocky Mountains and that the pits were located along the migration route to their wintering grounds to the southeast.[36] A piece of soft hide tied to the top of a pole placed on a high hill within view of the camp was employed to indicate the direction of the wind. If favorable winds were blowing, the leader was notified. He ordered all the trappers to prepare for trapping. None was allowed to eat before going out to the pits, as trapping was considered a form of ceremonial "suffering for the birds." Each trapper left shortly after daybreak for his pit, carrying his bait, a ceremonial fiber snare painted red with a piece of Black Medicine attached to it, and several leather snares. The bait was tied to two stakes driven into the ground four inches from the west edge of the pit. A shallow

35. See Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832–1834*, in *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, XXIII (Cleveland, 1906), 331–33, 377–78; cf. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, I (Philadelphia, 1857), 265–75.

36. Benson explained that the southland was the meeting place in winter of many creatures considered holy. Among these he included the thunderbirds, eagles, hawks, ducks, geese, cranes, herons, as well as the spirits of the corn and other garden products. This meeting place was an island where Old Woman Who Never Dies lived in her large earth lodge with four large snakes living in the water surrounding her island as her helpers.

3: Will and Spinden E-5 (1905) 1906
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

778 medicine bags as Maximilian calls them, seem to have been much less important than among the Arikara. Nevertheless these bundles were by no means absent. Maximilian relates that each man had his own medicine bag, the contents of which no one else might see. In addition to this there was a large medicine bag in the medicine lodge within which, Maximilian tells us, were preserved three sacred skulls, those of the chief who had led them out from underground, of his sister, and of his brother — also this chief's rattle. In the medicine lodge were also the sacred rattle and the four drums of hide, filled with water, which were made to resemble turtles and which they claimed, according to Catlin, they had always had. They had a sacred pipe or calumet also, which Maximilian was not allowed to see, the price of looking at it alone being placed at one hundred dollars. He says[1] that it was very hard for the Mandans to get these sacred pipes and much more trouble to consecrate them. Certain things must be hung upon them and among these was the skull of an animal which at that time was not found in the vicinity, and for which an enormous price had to be given. There were many other pipes called medicine pipes belonging to private owners, these however were merely ordinary pipes which had been consecrated by the ceremony already described. Each Mandan regarded his own medicine as a sacred animal, and in addition there were several animals which were regarded as sacred throughout the whole tribe. Owls and screech owls were kept in the lodges to predict the future. The war-eagle was considered as having great medicine power and they kept all sorts of birds of prey alive in the huts for their plumes. Geese were considered to be very sacred also, first because in one of their tales the Lord of Life turned into a goose and flew away with a flock of them, and also as they are the messengers of the Old Woman Who Never Dies or the Corn Mother. Of greatest importance among these sacred animals, however, was the white buffalo, whose hide was the most valuable article that a Mandan could possess. The hides were bought mostly from other nations, they were tanned with horns and hoofs on, and were not valuable unless of heifers

778 825

778 [439]

[1] Op. cit., p. 429.

4: Lowie E-5 (1910-1911) 1913
NQ17 Mandan NQ17

Once the Mandan lived underground. A small mouse went about and discovered a little hole in the ground, through which he crawled up and thus came to see the surface of the earth. He liked the light and the grass. He returned, and told his people about it. They said to Fox, "You are small enough to get up through the hole." So Fox went up. He got to the ground, looked about, and found everything good there. He liked it, and told the three chiefs[1] and their sister. The hole was still too small, so the Elk was called. "You have wide horns, make a little passage for us to get through." The Elk did as he was bidden, got above ground, and enjoyed the sight. He returned, and told them how good the country above was. Then the youngest of the three brothers went up through the opening, and found plenty of buffalo and elk. He hunted them, killed a buffalo and took the sinew and paunch, which he gave to his brothers on his return. They were very glad to get sinew, for underground they had been obliged to use sunflower threads for cordage. All the people wished to go above ground. They went to the hole, and found a vine passing from their country to the earth. The chiefs climbed up first on the vine. They found an abundance of game, and camped near the hole. The people went up, one after another, until a pregnant woman tried to climb up and broke the vine. It was impossible to readjust the vine, so those behind the woman were obliged to remain below. The chiefs' sister had forgotten to take along her elk robe, and called down for it to her mother, who was still underground at the time when the vine broke. But the woman answered, "You cannot get it now; however, you will find one just like it above. When you die, you will come back, and then you will be able to get your elk robe again." The girl, accordingly, got a new elk robe above ground just like the one left behind. It was tanned soft, without the hair on, and painted black on one side; fleshed bluebirds were attached to it. This robe was passed from heir to heir until the time of the Ft. Berthold settlement, where Moves-slowly, a Corn-singer, kept it by his shrine.

The Mandan ascended the River and built their villages. They came to a big clay hill named Bare-Hill, where no grass grew. Near this hill they built one village. A young man went up the hill in order to get a vision. On a high hill, on the opposite bank of the Missouri, he saw many women dancing. Every time he went up the hill he saw the same vision, but each time the women got closer. The fourth time they came closer still, they came across the Missouri. When they approached the man, he saw how they were dressed. They were all mysterious beings. At the same time, some women just like them rose from the Bare-Hill itself, and began to dance. They wore crowns of live snakes,[2] whose necks were striped with different colors. Their heads were on the left side of the dancers, the tails on the right. The visionary was also able to hear the mysterious women's songs. In accordance with this vision he started the River Women society. In the place of the snake crowns, he took blue-grass about three feet long and from a triple braid of this material he made the head band emblematic of the organization (Fig. 15). Into the left side of the head band he stuck in obliquely the tail feather of an eagle. The ends of the crown were tied in the middle of the forehead. Kinumakci came to the visionary, and was

[1] The skulls of these three chiefs, according to Hides-and-eats, were still kept by Poor-wolf at the time of my visit. Cf. Maximilian (II, 161): "Noch gegenwärtig heben die Mandans in ihrer Medicine-Tasche oder Beutel 3 heilige Schädel auf, von welchen der eine der des genannten Chefs und die anderen die dessen Bruders und Schwester seyn sollen."

[2] Garter-snakes, according to one informant; according to another, brown snakes about 3 feet long, which the Indians call "grass-eaters."

6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

cultivated by the Mandans, Manitaries, and Arikkaras, attains a great height, and is suffered to grow up from the seeds, without having any care whatever bestowed upon it. It is not transplanted. When it is ripe the stalks are cut, dried, and powdered; or the leaves, with the small branches, are cut into little pieces. The taste and smell are disagreeable to an European, resembling camomile rather than tobacco. The plant is not now so much cultivated as formerly, being superseded by the more pleasant tobacco of the Whites; but the species is still preserved. It is only on solemn occasions, for instance, in negotiations for peace, that this tobacco is still smoked; the seed is, therefore, preserved in the medicine bag of the nation, that the plant may never be lost. When they mean to smoke this tobacco, a small quantity of fat is rubbed on it.

The cultivation of the maize and other fields, of which each family prepares three, four, or five acres, takes place in the month of May. Rows of small furrows are made, into which the grains of maize are thrown singly, and covered with earth. Three times in the summer the plants are hoed, and the earth heaped up against them, that the moisture may have better access to them. The harvest takes place in October, when men, women, and children, each lend a helping hand. At present the women use, in their field labour, a broad iron hoe, with a crooked wooden handle, which they obtain from the merchants. Charbonneau recollected the time when they used the shoulder blade of the buffalo for this purpose. The fields are never fenced, but lie quite open and exposed.

The wild plants of the prairie are used by the Mandans, [illegible] people of the Upper Missouri; and to those before-mentioned, I can only add the [illegible] (*Faba minor equina*), a fruit resembling the bean, which is said to grow in the ground, but which I did not see; there are many other roots in the prairie, which are used for food. The gourds are eaten fresh as well as dry. The beans are seldom eaten of one kind, but many sorts are mixed together. The maize is boiled or roasted, then pounded, mixed with fat, and made up into small cakes and baked. There are, of course, many other ways of dressing it. The sweet maize has a very pleasant taste, especially when it is in what is called the milky state; it is then boiled, dried, and laid by for use.

All kinds of animals serve the Mandans for food; the bear, when it is young and fat, the wolf, the fox, in short, everything except the horse; the ermine is not eaten by many; and of birds they dislike the turkey-buzzard, and the raven, because they feed on the dead bodies deposited on the stages. They have a great aversion from serpents, but eat the turtle; the buffalo is the chief object of their chase, as it supplies them with skins, meat, tallow, marrow-bones, sinews, and many other necessaries. Next to the buffalo the beaver is the most indispensable to them, since it not only furnishes them with valuable skins, but supplies them with delicate food, the fat tail, especially, being considered quite a dainty morsel by the Indians. Pemmican,

6: Wied-Neuwied T-5 (1832-1834) 1843 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

773 labourers, and the mouse, the mole, and the before-mentioned stags, perform the work. The birds, which fly from the sea-shore in the spring, represent the old woman, who then travels to the north to visit "the old man who never dies," and who always resides in that quarter. She does not, however, stop there long, but generally returns in three or four days. In former times, the old woman's hut was near the little Missouri, where the Indians often went to visit her. One day, twelve Manitaries came to her, and she set before them a pot of maize, which was so small, that it was not sufficient to satisfy even one; but she invited them to eat, and, as soon as the pot was empty, it was instantly refilled, and all the twelve men had enough. This occurred several times while the old woman resided in that spot.

773 755 [825] 778 Serpents, especially the rattlesnakes, are in a greater or less degree "medicine" for these people, who kill them, and cut off the rattles, which they regard as an effectual remedy in many diseases. They chew one of the joints, and wet various parts of the body of the patient with the saliva. They likewise believe in the existence of a colossal medicine serpent, which lives in a lake three or four days' journey from this place, and to which they make offerings. The following is their tradition of this monster:—Two young men were strolling along the bank of the river, and observed a cavern, through which curiosity led them to go. On reaching the further end, they were surprised at beholding a picturesque country, wholly unknown to them, where numerous herds of buffaloes were grazing. Suddenly, however, an immense giant stood before them, who demanded—"Who are you, you little people? I am afraid, if I were to lay hold of you, I should crush you!" He then lifted them in his hands very carefully, and carried them into the village, which was inhabited by giants like himself. Accompanied by the two Mandans, they went out to hunt buffaloes. The giants killed the buffaloes by throwing stones, but the Mandans destroyed many with their arrows, which greatly delighted the giants. At that time the giants were at war with the eagles, which were very numerous, and which they slew by flinging stones. The Mandans, however, shot them with arrows, so that they speedily procured a large quantity of eagles' feathers. They then took leave of the giants, and were permitted to depart with all their valuable feathers. On their return they found the cave blocked up by a colossal serpent. At first they were at a loss how to make a passage, but they soon collected a large pile of wood and burnt the monster. One of them tasted the roasted flesh of the serpent, and, finding it palatable, partook of more. They proceeded on their way, when the head of the Mandan who had tasted the serpent's flesh began to swell prodigiously, and an intolerable itching came over his face. He begged his friend not to leave him, but to take him home. On the second day he continued to swell, increased in length, felt an irritation all over, and

773 778 was soon afterwards transformed into a serpent, upon which he begged his companion to take him to the Missouri, which the latter accomplished in three days. As soon as the serpent reached the water, he dived, but speedily rose to the surface, and said, "There are many like me below, but